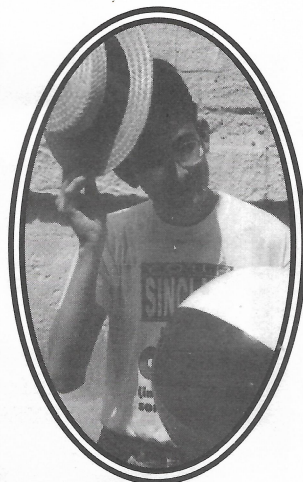


CRASH SUBS CLUB

WITH YOUR HOST



Jonathan Nash

And now, as promised, the *Captain Blood* story. (Microscopes ahoy!)

The Ark According To Captain Blood, by spook French company Infogrames Software

Chapter One Fishy Goings-on

This sinister little tale started life one grey and drizzly winter's day. The city was soaked to the bone. A constant honking of angry car-horns drilled and shook the air, even the dry if stuffy kind that hung around the 20th floor of 10 Eazy Street, where a sheet of grimy paper taped to the door of number seven vibrated archaically. The writing on the paper said: BOB MORLOK, FOR PITY'S SAKE KEEP QUIET.

'As if angry car-horns could read...' thought the postman, shaking his head in disgust. He knocked. The door opened a fraction.

'You Morlok?'

'Gasp! How did you guess?' yawned a bleary shadow behind the door.

'Special delivery! Sign here!' snarled the postman wearily, sticking a greasy pad with ballpoint attached into Morlok's unshaven face. Managing a trembly if recognisable cross, Bob Morlok was handed a letter. Muttering what may have been 'thanks', he shut the door and looked around for the letter-opener. Then he remembered what had happened the last time he'd used it and ripped the envelope open with his teeth instead.

'Your royalties for the second quarter. Total before taxes=350. Best wishes, your publisher.'

Bob tried but couldn't keep back a violent bout of nausea. He smoked his first Camel of the day. Thirty-five cents to live on for three months! 'I gotta program a major hit,' thought Bob, 'with a killer storyline. Or else.' This attic room had a skylight. He gazed through it at the dripping rooftops and sighed. He was clean out of ideas as he shut his eyes and squeezed. Nothing came. Total block. Crushing his last butt into an overflowing ashtray, Bob announced to anyone who cared to listen (no one did): 'Blood's dead. Stone cold dead as a dodo. He'll write no more games and his pseudonym will as of now disappear from all local Computerland shelves for ever.'

Bob Morlok sighed once more and decided on a breath of air. The joint in Binary Street was open. Loud music poured out. He walked over to the bar and ordered a coffee. Beside him, some kids were noisily wiping out aliens on a video game. Bob turned to look. Intergalactic robots exploded with inhuman shrieks. The skinny kid looked onto the joystick was yelling triumphantly - he'd just made the hi score. Bob snorted. 'What a zero!'

The insult had the effect of breaking up the party atmosphere. 'Oh yeah? Go ahead and beat my score, pops!' Skinny snickered.

This was what Bob had been angling for. His right hand closed over the stick and his left pushed play. The following carnage of screaming metal, green blood and exploding alien troopships was all over in a few seconds. Enemy losses were so sickeningly enormous that the score blocked on 999999. Without even looking, Bob typed in B-L-O-O-D as the latest hi-scorer.

'You're B-Blood?' stammered Skinny who looked like he'd just swallowed a live pacman.

'Gaze up in awe, junior,' drawled Bob kindly, 'you've just lived through a major moment in your life.' With that he turned and disappeared through the door, leaving behind one unpaid-for coffee and a bunch of amazed kids.

'That really zapped 'em,' grinned Bob to himself. He was savouring the glory so much that he didn't see the old man walking towards him. Bob Morlok looked down at the old guy sprawling on the sidewalk. 'Gee, I'm really sorry. Are you okay?' he asked, helping the other to his feet.

'Sure, sure. Don't worry about it, young feller. Not your fault if I'm so absent-minded.'

Suddenly, Bob's eyes switched on. 'Wow! You can't be! You aren't! Damn it, you are Charles Darwin, the famous bio-whatever.'

'No need to shout it out, son; there may be newspaper hacks lounging in the trashcans.'

'Oh yeah, sure. Say, listen. Your books really made a major impression. All that stuff about super bonus scores for the fastest.'

'Yes, well, that's one way of...'

'Hey, wait a minute. Aren't you supposed to be dead, theoretically?'

'Let's just say I'm living incognito for the moment.'

'Wow! That's major, hey, listen. Let me buy you a drink. No, really.'

Morlok guided his new friend into a nearby bar. They sat down close to a pinball machine.

'Beer,' said Bob to the guy who was taking the orders.

'Water, please,' said Darwin.

'Water, huh,' muttered the waiter and disappeared.

'Interested in biology are you, Mr. uh...'

'Blood. That's my name.'

'Blood, eh? My, my. Well, well.'

The old man's gaze centred on the pinball machine. He glowered. 'Accursed invention. I've been working on video games for months. The real reason I came here to Slick City - but who listens to an old doddler called Mortimer Slithe!'

'Slithe. Your pseudonym is Slithe? You could've done better than that!'

'A long story. And pleasant. I'm stuck with Slithe. No matter. Do you believe in aliens, Blood?'

Bob was taken aback by the question. He stammered, 'Well, you know, I, er...' But his lack of conviction went unnoticed. Slithe was getting into gear.

'They're here! They're here! Pacmen are reproducing in millions! They actually exist, do you hear me!'

Bob-Blood recoiled in shock.

The old man suddenly stood up and left the bar. Bob was too stunned to stop him. That was the last he ever saw of Charles Darwin.

Chapter Two

And Bob Made Blood

Back in his apartment, Bob's mind was still reeling. Darwin, Papepeople, aliens... what if it were true?

'Ye Gods! If it's really happening, something's gotta be done!' thought Bob. 'I know,' he cried. 'I'll infiltrate them. That's my new masterpiece! I'll need to create a being based on man, a kind of superman, completely competent, like, like MYSELF!'

And while he raved, Bob was already at the keyboard, typing in the vital first instructions.

Months passed. List-cuts snaked the available space. Ashtrays were piled on ashtrays. Bob programmed on. Six months later, he had created a vessel called Ark, fitted with an onboard computer called bio-consciousness. Still later, the Ark was placed under the command of his computer double: Captain Blood. His mission: fight evil in all the computerised universe. Lastly, he created a bio-writer whose task would be to recount the amazing saga in detail.

Finally came the great day. He typed in the final momentous instruction: RUN. At that very instant, something major happened: Bob winked out. I mean, he physically disappeared!

Chapter Three

Report From Ark's Bio-writer

The Ark had materialised somewhere near Andromeda. Its shape corresponded down to the last hump to what Bob had programmed. You couldn't tell it apart from any other boring asteroid. Its stupendous mass prevented it from landing anywhere, but that was compensated for by the sheer amazingness of its bio-tech systems.

Inside, in a very snappy conapt, lovingly done up by the program, a mummy looking like Bob sat in a padded armchair, in front of which a multitude of instruments flickered in the phosphorescent blue light diffused by an enormous 3D screen that filled one whole wall of the conapt.

The Ark bobbed gently in the magnetic tide. The bridge clock showed 000 when the screen came on, prolonging the conapt into infinity. The diorama of Andromeda sparkled in the distance.

'Blood came to life very suddenly. The first pains were awful: a tearing noise in his head, as if something had split his skull open. The pain gave way to a strange feeling. His first thoughts filled him with a sense of wellbeing: the passage from nothingness to superior Beinghood was now possible. He tested his memory implants. Nostalgia filled his mind: a sandy beach at summer's end. Salty breeze, childhood, Disneyworld...'

'Honk here. Checksum implant: 10/10. Medichack in progress.'

The voice of Ark's bio-consciousness tore Blood from his daydreams.

'Mission recall,' it barked. 'Please state orders.'

'Activate the neutrino scanner,' croaked Blood, 'and for pity's sake don't bark so loudly. Try being normal.'

'Understood, Mr Blood. Please answer.'

'Attaboy,' approved Blood. 'Now, Mr Honk, activate the local map.'

The map appeared instantaneously on the conapt screen. Blood studied it carefully. 'Superimpose the radar image,' he ordered.

'Get us out of here, you molo!' Haldi had he finished, when he was thrust violently against the armchair by a phenomenal force. The Ark was plunging into Hyperspace. 'Wow! We leally outkicked those guys!' sniggered Blood.

'My leepok, captain: the ship has no significant damage. Some minor problems with the bio-lit, I'll leepik it immediately. The Hyperspace jump did not conform entirely to skandall plodeude. /... /... the jump was not inkellopeded, howeve! Oh, Gleeak Heavens...!'

'Whaak! Kalk! Whaak's happening!' lealed Blood. 'Feal gipped his soul.'

'The mukpleplex failed during the jump... Oh, no!... the kelepolkel has cloned you! Ak! leask thilky copies ale roose in deakination galaxy!'

'Whaak? Ale you clazy?'

'Afraid nok, captain. And thele's worse... you're shot of vikal fluid. The plooces of degeneration has already skalked. Ki ki ki ki ki kikiikiikiikiiki... k... /!!!'

To be continued...

SALUTATIONS!

Monday, 14th May 1993. 11:53. Colin emerges from his cubbyhole of an office. 'Jonathan... Andy... could you come in here for a minute, please?'

Oh, hang on.

Look, you'd better go and read the Next Month bit in the mag itself.



See the problem? To be honest, we've been sitting here month after month, wondering if today's the day when Colin the publisher calls us into his cubbyhole of an office to deliver those dreaded words, 'Get out.' (Or something along those lines, anyway.) And now it's happened.

Actually, it's slightly better than I first thought. At least we're getting a goodbye ish, instead of being told three-quarters through bashing one into shape that it will be the last (as happened with CRASH and SU). As you read this, no doubt with tears splashing on the paper, I'm ringing round the various publishing houses and games companies, trying to track down as many YS veterans as possible for a big group photo. (Spook fact: every YS Ed but T'zer still works at Future.) It remains to be seen how much of a bump the bumper ish will have, but rest assured (what an odd phrase that is) we'll be cooking up something a bit spesh with which to say goodbye to all you lovely people, and the other readers as well. (Yikes.)

Blimey, I'm feeling a bit depressed now. A-ha! Some good news. Linda came a-visiting Monday afternoon - yup, she's been discharged from hospital. Hurrah! After astonishing the docs by recovering at twice the expected rate, she's been let loose in the community (or on the community, or whatever). It's brilliant. Andy and I went to see her in hospital with a present of Frank Sinatra's biography as written by Nancy Sinatra, and she loved it. I'd like to say it aided in her rapid recovery, but that's probably completely untrue, so I won't.

Right-o. Must be off. Things to do, people to hassle, prizes to send out (erk).

Your Sinclair - not gone, just forgotten. Poignant, eh? (If not entirely accurate.)

Happy trails, and see you next month,

Jonathan

THE MYSTERY OF THE MISSING MISS

A YS Photo Story

One day at YS...

That's very odd.

Meanwhile...

Just take these twice after meals.

Hokay, Doctor.

Suddenly!

Freeze, y'all! We're takin' over YS, see?

Oh no!

But luckily...

Not so fast, nefarious evildoer! You reckoned without the Bill Spookly Juggling All-Stars and Part-Time Security Quartet!

Bang bang!

Hurrah!

Yow! Wow! Okay! We give up!

Hurrah!

The End